CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Southeast Electric Co-Op LUL-Easement Application for 3-Phase Line to Mill Iron
Proposed Implementation Date:	2013
Proponent:	Southeast Electric Co-Op
Location:	T2N-R58E-Sec 16, T2N-R59E-Sec 36
County:	Carter County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Southeast Electric has contacted the Eastern Land Office requesting a LUL and Easement for the construction of a 3 phase distribution line to the Mill Iron area. The line will service local farms and ranches as well as any future infrastructure developments in the area.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The proponent has submitted a form DS-406 application for utility easement and a DS-401 to the ELO. The proponent has requested right of way easement for a 24.94 kV line. The total span of the line across the two mentioned tracts of trust land will be 3559.4 feet. The project engineering calls for 15 single poles to be placed on trust land. A field review of the project was completed on April 23, 2013 by ELO Staff. The proponent has requested a land use license to begin construction while the easement application is processed. Due to the small scope of the project no public comment was sought.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant the proponent a right of way easement and land use license for the proposed power line.
Alternative B- No Action

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Alternative A- Some soil disturbance may occur during the construction phase of this project. Soils in the area are not fragile or unstable. Disturbance would be related to driving of equipment and auguring of holes to place poles. Any disturbance should be minimal.

Alternative B-No Impact

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Alternative A- No impact expected

Alternative B- No Impact

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Alternative A- Pollutants and particulate levels may be increased during the construction of the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal. Increase in pollutants during construction should be almost negligible.

Alternative B- No Impact

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Alternative A- Minimal impact to the vegetative community is expected. Species present on the tract include Western Wheatgrass (Agropyron smithii), Green Needlegrass (Stipa viridula), Blue Bunch Wheatgrass (Agropyron spicatum), Needle and Thread (Stipa comata), Prairie Junegrass (Koleria pyramidata), Blue Grama (Bouteloua gracilis), Threadleaf Sedge (Carex filifolia), Sandberg Bluegrass (Poa secunda), Big Sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata), Silver Sagebrush (Artemisia cana), Fringed Sagewort (Artemisia frigida), Broom Snakeweed (Gutierrezia sarothrae), Downy Brome (Bromus tectorum) and Japanese Brome (Bromus japonicus). No rare plant types were noted within the project area.
Alternative B- No Impact

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Alternative A- This project may disrupt wildlife habitat for a number of species. Species which may have habitat in the area of the project may include deer, elk, antelope, rodents, coyotes, foxes, mountain lions, bobcats, amphibians, raptors, migratory and prairie birds. The majority of disruption would occur during the construction and reclamation phases of the project. Upon project completion habitats and wildlife utilization should return to normal preconstruction levels.
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Alternative B- No Impact

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Alternative A- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program Database showed T2N-R58E-Sec 16 had six species of concern noted within the general project area. These species include Black Tailed Prairie Dog (noted

in 1916), Fringed Myotis, Hoary Bat, Golden Eagle, Eastern Racer, and Northern Leopard Frog. No evidence of these species were observed during the field review. Any impact to these species should me minimal and temporary. T2N-R59E-Sec 36 had no observations of endangered, sensitive or species of concern.

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Alternative A-Upon inspection of the parcels by the Eastern Land Office staff no significant findings were noted on these parcels. A search of the TLMS database shows no known cultural resources on these tracts. Due to the small scope and no ground structures no significant impacts should occur.
Alternative B- No Impact

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Alternative A- The aesthetics of the site would be slightly altered with the addition of a power line. The project will be located along Highway 7 and the Mill Iron Road and will be visible from these publicly traveled routes. As there are other power lines in the area effects to aesthetics should be minimal.
Alternative B- No Impact

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Alternative A- No Impact Expected

Alternative B- No Impact

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Alternative A- There may be risks to human health and safety in the construction of the project, but this will be done by trained professionals who accept the risk as an occupational hazard.
Alternative B- No Impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Alternative A- It should have a positive effect on industrial, commercial and agricultural activities and production. This should allow for easier access to electricity for all parties concerned.

Alternative B- No Impact

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

Alternative A- This project has the potential to create jobs with further development possibilities.

Alternative B- No Impact

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Alternative A- This project should have a positive impact on local and state taxes. The amount of which is unknown at this time.

Alternative B- No Impact

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Alternative A- No Impact Expected

Alternative B- No Impact

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Alternative A- No Impact Expected

Alternative B- No Impact

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Alternative A- No Impact Expected
Alternative B- No Impact

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Alternative A- No Impact Expected
Alternative B- No Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No Impact Expected

Alternative B- No Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Alternative A- No Impact Expected

Alternative B- No Impact

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Alternative A- This will provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a permanent easement and a temporary land use license for construction. The monetary amount of these items has not been established at this time

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Scott Aye	**Date:**	4-30-2013
	Title:	Land Use Specialist		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested right of way easement across state owned trust lands for the proposed Southeast Electric Co-Op power line should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Chris Pileski
	Title:	ELO Area Manager
Signature:		**Date**: